

Garden City Winery Pops the Cork on Bubbly Plus another winery gets canned

By Tara Morgan with the Boise Weekly



Leslie Preston, of Coiled Wines, is big on the bubbly.

Though the beginning of the season's massive gorging is now behind us, there's still more gluttony on the horizon; and what's a proper feast without a few festive libations?

This December, Garden City's Coiled Wines has a special treat for fans of the bubbly: the 2014 Rizza, a holiday-table-worthy sparkling riesling.

"It's a Methode Champenoise wine, meaning that it is undergoing its secondary fermentation in bottle," explained Coiled owner and winemaker Leslie Preston. "It's from riesling grapes that I picked this harvest."

Methode Champenoise works like this: After a wine has undergone its primary fermentation, a small amount of sugar and yeast is added to each bottle during the bottling process, which activates a secondary fermentation that produces carbon dioxide. The bottles are then reopened to remove the yeast, topped off with more wine and recapped. In order to produce her Rizza sparkling riesling, Preston had to repeat this elaborate process on 4,000 bottles—by hand.

"It's the most challenging wine I've ever made. ... You have to know what you're doing and you have to have a good chemistry base and you have to be a meticulous winemaker," said Preston. "The attention to detail and everything being spot-on is super important with sparkling wine and I think that's another reason that some people don't tackle it. I was terrified in September making this wine but I'm having fun now because I'm really happy with the wine."



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Though most champagnes are aged in the bottle before they're released, Preston preferred to release her sparkling riesling this season.

"I really look at this as a way to showcase how beautiful Idaho riesling is. ... I don't want all the sort of toasty, yeasty character to cover up what the grape tends to show," she said. "So that's why I'm not aging this on yeast for like a year, as some champagne would have it."

Preston will primarily sell the Rizza for \$28 in her Garden City tasting room at 107 E. 44th St., which she shares with Cinder Wines and Telaya Wine Co.

"We're releasing it to Club on [Tuesday,] Dec. 16," said Preston. "I might do a little bit at a few shops or restaurants for special dinners, but I'm mostly trying to sell it out of the tasting room just because this has been such an expensive wine to make that the more I can sell it out of the tasting room, the more I can kind of recapture that."

Despite the cost, the grueling process and the sleepless nights, Preston said she's now a fizzy wine convert.

"It's like I'm addicted now; I now have to make sparkling wine every year," she said. "It's really thrilling."

In other riesling news, Coiled neighbor Split Rail Winery has announced plans to release a canned white wine under its Strange Folk label in the spring of 2015.

"Split Rail's our main label then we've got a second label called Strange Folk," said winemaker Jed Glavin. "It's all kegged wine that we do growler fills of at the winery."

Strange Folk's La Boheme White Wine will come in a light blue can embellished with an illustration of a woman in a red beret.

"We aren't advertising it as riesling, we're just going to label it 'white wine' for now just because I'm kind of worried about people's perception of riesling. ... I think people, when they hear riesling, they're thinking it's going to be some sugar bomb," said Glavin.

La Boheme will be sold in 375 milliliter—or 12.7 ounce—cans that Glavin had to special order from England.

"So basically two glasses of wine in a beer-style can is what we're going to do," he said.

Glavin gleaned the idea from Oregon's Union Wine Company, which sells its Underwood Pinot Noir and Pinot Gris in these larger-style cans—double the size of Sofia Coppola's popular canned blanc de blancs.



Split Rail's new canned white wine hits shelves next spring.

As Glavin explained, his canned white wine will have a little bit of residual sugar but plenty of acid to balance it out. The wine's tasting notes include descriptors like: "fresh peach, honeysuckle, ginger, crisp clouds and colorful rainbows."

"It truthfully doesn't even taste like riesling," Glavin added.

Glavin said La Boheme will try to court the eco-conscious, active crowd.

"I think putting it into an aluminum can is a lot more recyclable than glass and it's a lot more mobile than glass," he said. "So camping, river rafting, stadiums, places that don't allow glass; I think there's a cool market for it. If you have a big cooler full of beer, it's easier to throw these cans of white wine in there for people who are more wine drinkers than beer drinkers."

Split Rail is working with a local distributor to get their cans on shelves by next spring. They will also be available in Split Rail's tasting room, located at 4338 W. Chinden Blvd. in Garden City.

"We're stoked because I think it'll just add to our repertoire of funky stuff that we're trying to do with wine," said Glavin.

